

## HPAI: Key Points for NC DPH September 14, 2015

### Background:

- Avian influenza is a viral disease that affects all species of birds.
- Avian influenza viruses are classified as either “low pathogenic” or “highly pathogenic” based on genetic markers and on the severity of disease they cause in chickens. Highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses, also known as “HPAI”, cause severe illness and death in poultry.
- Avian flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections have occurred.

### Current situation:

- Highly-pathogenic avian influenza A viruses were first identified in birds in the United States in December 2014 and have infected wild birds and poultry in multiple states (21) since that time.
- To date, no HPAI infections have been detected in domestic or wild birds in North Carolina.
- No human infections with these particular HPAI viruses have been reported. However, similar HPAI viruses have infected people in other parts of the world.
- The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has been leading the state’s efforts to prepare for possible HPAI infections in wild birds or poultry in North Carolina. The North Carolina Division of Public Health is working with the Department of Agriculture, local health departments and other partners on health communications and on monitoring and management of people exposed to HPAI.

### Human health risk:

- Your risk of getting sick from HPAI is very low. To date, no one has gotten sick from the HPAI viruses recently identified in the United States.
- Although the risk of human infections is low, the CDC recommends that all people exposed to HPAI-infected birds should be monitored for illness for 10 days after their last exposure. Identification and monitoring of exposed people will be carried out in coordination with state and local public health officials.
- People can be exposed to HPAI by working directly with infected birds or by being in contact with objects or environments that have been contaminated by infected birds.
- You cannot get HPAI from properly handled and cooked poultry or eggs.
- Our food supply is safe. Sick birds do not enter the food chain.
- Seasonal influenza vaccination will not prevent infection with HPAI, but can reduce the risk of co-infection with seasonal and HPAI viruses.